



John Nygren

WISCONSIN STATE REPRESENTATIVE ★ 89TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Finance

Budget Co-chair John Nygren: State Budget Far From Crisis

Recently, Democratic members of the State Legislature have branded the 2015-17 state budget as a “crisis budget,” but this is a far-cry from reality. Just as you manage your family’s money, the legislature needs to balance our state’s checkbook. As an elected official, it’s my duty to the voters of our state to make decisions based on what’s best for taxpayers like you. Spending money we don’t have is neither sustainable nor fiscally responsible. To succeed, we must spend within our means to keep our state running efficiently and effectively.

Budgets are about priorities; after traveling the state for the Joint Finance Committee (JFC) public hearings in Brillion, Milwaukee, Rice Lake, and Reedsburg, we have heard which state issues are priorities to Wisconsin residents. We have listened to public opinion on the governor’s proposed budget and we are making improvements based on your opinions.

In every corner of the state, Wisconsinites expressed similar concerns about the governor’s proposed budget. Most of these concerns revolved around health care, specifically aging and long-term care, and public education. It is for this reason that my colleagues on the JFC and I are prioritizing these issues now that the governor’s proposal is in our hands. We will work to make modifications and improvements to the proposal so it becomes a budget all of Wisconsin can be proud of.

First and foremost, we are looking to continue investing in public education. Last budget, we increased funding to K-12 education by \$300 million. This budget, investing in K-12 education will again be our top priority. Additionally, my colleagues and I are looking for ways to reduce the proposed cut to the UW System. It’s clear that there is room for reform and improvement in public education, but we will work to ensure our state’s students continue to have access to a quality education.

Similarly, folks around the state have expressed concerns about aging and long-term care in the state budget. From SeniorCare to IRIS to FamilyCare, many people have questions about the governor’s proposal for the Department of Health Services (DHS). It is for this reason that my colleagues on the JFC and I recently announced that we plan to protect SeniorCare for seniors currently enrolled in the program. As the budget process progresses, we will continue to ensure decisions regarding Wisconsinites’ health care are properly vetted and evaluated.

It’s clear that Wisconsin is heading in the right direction. Our state’s unemployment rate has fallen to 4.6% -- lower than the national average at 5.5%. We are addressing the skills gap issue and putting more Wisconsinites back to work. Moreover, in the last budget we returned over



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\$2 billion to hardworking middle class taxpayers. Decisions like these are helping to stimulate our economy, strengthen our workforce, and support our state's citizens.

Thank you for your continued input this budget season. Lawmakers like me wouldn't be able to craft a sensible budget without your participation. When the legislature is finished improving upon the governor's proposal, we will have produced a sustainable budget that will surely continue to move Wisconsin forward.